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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDRESSEE USAFCENTCOM VICE USCENAF)

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TAGS: PARM PREL MASS ETRD MU
SUBJECT: FW: SALVAGING F-16 SALES TO OMAN

REF: a) MUSCAT 82

CLASSIFIED BY: Gary A. Grappo, Ambassador, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Embassy - Muscat; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) During a February 2 meeting with visiting U.S. AFCENT Commander General Gary North, Air Vice Marshal Yahya Rasheed al-Juma, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), indicated that the Omani government has decided to purchase Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft to replace one of two squadrons (12 aircraft each) of its aging Jaguar fighters. The Air Vice Marshal also implied that RAFO was leaning towards buying a second squadron of F-16s to replace the remaining Jaguars. [Note: Delivery of Oman's current squadron of 12 Block 50 F-16s was completed in 2006. End Note.] Oman will apparently announce its planned acquisitions "soon." On February 3, the British Chief of Mission in Muscat shared similar information on Oman's aircraft purchase plans with the Ambassador. However, the British ambassador only "supposed" that the Omanis would buy another squadron of F-16s. He had been informed officially by Oman's Ministry of Defense (MOD) only that RAFO would buy one squadron of Typhoons.

¶2. (C) Comment: While Oman's decision to purchase Typhoon aircraft is disappointing for several reasons (reftel), post is encouraged that the sale of a second squadron of F-16s to Oman may still be in play. To help convince the Omani government to go forward with the purchase of more F-16s, post has asked the Department of Defense to provide aircraft cost and basic performance comparisons for the F-16 and Typhoon and will then use this information to draft and submit advocacy letters to Oman's Minister Responsible for Defense Affairs, Sayyid Badr bin Saud al-Busaidi, and Minister of National Economy Ahmed bin Abdulkarim Macki. Post understands that representatives of Lockheed Martin will arrive in the Sultanate on or about February 7 to also lobby for F-16 sales. Advocacy letters from the Secretary of Defense and the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force would further help to ensure that this major sale does not slip from our grasp. End Comment.

GRAPPO

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